



Michigan Senate

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The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0508

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Reid:

Accountability is the new watchword as lawmakers around the country grapple with complex financial issues in 2009. All elected officials must insist that taxpayer dollars from any federally-approved, *temporary* stimulus package are spent wisely.

Requiring transparency and accountability is vital as the executive and legislative branches contemplate one of the most sweeping economic proposals in American history.

As eager states rush to receive the anticipated federal aid, there must be safeguards. Without careful oversight by appropriations committees at the state level, the money will just be used as a one-time, quick fix that tries to mask long-term structural shortfalls and delay real reform.

Congress recently required the Big Three automakers to present a comprehensive business strategy that includes specifics on across-the-board company restructuring. Federal lawmakers should ask for the same details from states that seek billions in special relief from Washington.

Before a single dime is given to any state government, Congress must demand more answers from governors. At least 44 states face budget shortfalls. None of them, including Michigan, should receive federal taxpayer dollars unless they adjust the spending practices and structural problems that drove them to require such assistance. This is especially important considering the stimulus package will only last for two years.

Governors must be better managers or Congress will face repeated federal relief requests for many years to come. Unless the states grasp reality, and make some tough cuts, they will soon find their budget blueprints are unsustainable after the temporary federal rescue quickly ends.

That is why the funds allocated from the temporary relief package should go through the full appropriations process in each state with the proper committees and subcommittees providing valuable oversight and ensuring accountability.

If Congress spends taxpayer money without requiring spending reforms, it will be a blatant breach of members' fiduciary duty.

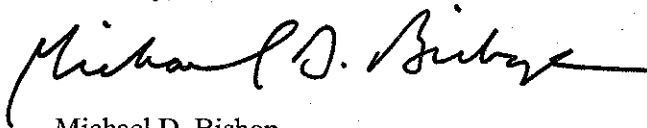
Our federal government should not support the states' continued addiction to runaway spending. A financial stimulus that prompts infrastructure upgrades and other building projects could provide many jobs to ailing state economies. We should not squander this temporary source of funding on a patch to overgrown state governments.

Here in Michigan, we know what it means to face a financial crisis after several years of rising unemployment and addressing significant budget shortfalls in 2007 and 2008. Michigan is among those in line for the temporary relief. But putting a federal Band-Aid on our budget won't solve Michigan's structural budget deficit or overspending problem. And a one-time federal economic stimulus certainly won't cover Michigan's gap for fiscal year 2010 budget and beyond.

Now is the wrong time for any governor to introduce new programs that require more spending. The time is right to enact budget reforms and cuts instead of pushing the budget problem down the road with an even bigger debt for future generations to repay.

Please consider this perspective as you debate one of the most crucial issues to ever face Congress.

Sincerely,



Michael D. Bishop
Senate Majority Leader
12th District

cc: The Honorable Carl Levin
 The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
 The Honorable Dave Camp
 The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
 The Honorable John Dingell
 The Honorable Vernon Ehlers
 The Honorable Peter Hoekstra
 The Honorable Dale Kildee
 The Honorable Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick
 The Honorable Sander Levin
 The Honorable Thaddeus McCotter
 The Honorable Candice Miller
 The Honorable Gary Peters
 The Honorable Mike Rogers
 The Honorable Mark Schauer